ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

[74]   Aspects of the invention utilize a secondary communication channel to conduct flow control at the word level. As a result, the overhead associated with flow control can be reduced, as well as the risk of buffer overflow. In one embodiment, embedded flow control information is encoded as reversed running disparity codes in each transmission lane. Additional control symbols may be coded by grouping a series of specially coded data words or inspecting a selected data word at regular intervals.